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legitimate, for men rely upon their labours and place their faith in the rain, the making of which is the prerogative of the queen.

Failure of one's crops is attributed, not to witchcraft, but in a bad year to the heat of the sun and in normal seasons to indolence or bad soil. In the last resort, however, when every one suffers equally, or when there is a major drought, the calamity is regarded as a punishment by the gods, who 'hold the arms of the queen', or by the queen herself, who is displeased in her heart. Diseases and pests are not magical visitations. Though called 'the witch of the mealies' because it saps their strength, witchweed (*Wormskioldia longipedunculata*) is neither sent by witches nor combated by supernatural means. Destructive insects and parasites, such as stalkborers, weevils, and caterpillars, are regarded, not as being 'sent', but as perfectly natural results of untimely planting or unseasonal rain. Birds, monkeys, rats, and mice are, generally speaking, combated by the practical means at the disposal of man, such as trapping or scaring. Numerous other precautions are taken: one does not plant millet unless one's neighbours do likewise, because when there are many fields, all, not merely one, will be at the mercy of predatory birds; people favour bird-proof corns, though they are harder to thresh; late-maturing crops, whatever their productivity, are discarded in favour of those ripening early, because they cannot be reaped before the cattle start their unrestricted grazing; and a much-favoured peanut, which is also easy to reap, is liable to sprout unless special precautions are taken. In short, the problems of agriculture are tackled in a practical manner.

This does not mean that a practical demonstration of the superiority of new methods will always have the desired effect. Agricultural demonstrators have made very little impression. It is often thought that this is due to the improvidence, lack of ambition, and innate conservatism of the 'savage'. A farmer will tell you that, after years of experience on his farm, his Native labourers go home to practise their primitive, wasteful methods. The trouble is not savage incapacity, but the incongruity of our ways, our technology, and our ideals with theirs. The demonstrator is like a teacher speaking a foreign language and working with material and concepts which do not exist in the society. He often is wholly ignorant of the background of belief. His education makes him unduly scornful of savage superstitions, instead of using them to advantage. In agriculture, among the Lovedu, there is one practice we might call superstition. It is *hu upa*, a method of safeguarding crops with medicine against the depredations of birds and monkeys. It is quite harmless, absorbs little of the time or energy of the few children who scatter the medicine, and does not preclude the use of other, more empirical methods. There is no need to waste eloquence upon eradicating a practice which strengthens the interest of the children in agriculture, causes no slackening in their scaring activities from the platforms erected in the fields, and, in the last resort, is an effective psychological device; for it equalizes the struggle of man against nature and maintains at the requisite intensity the confidence which enables him to strive hopefully against his difficulties.

Practical knowledge is undoubtedly the weapon with which demonstrators should combat progressive degeneration in agriculture; but it is

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protective medicines (*dipiaba*) of the village. The fruits are eaten by herdboys, January to March. The first appearance of its flowers (October) indicates the time when chickens must not be hatched or bought, because of the danger of sand fleas (*madzɛdzɛ*). There are, incidentally, many other plants which indicate the approach of the seasons or the correct time for certain activities, e.g. when *musoso* (*Terminalia serecea*) blossoms, edible termites get their wings and children go out to catch them.

Muvizi (*Colocasia antiquorum*). Planted at home—in the old days also in river gardens—to provide relish from August to November. The leaves take only a few minutes to cook, compared with an hour or more for many other relishes. The bulb is cooked separately, like sweet potatoes.

Muvɔbyani (*Lanna edulis*). A soft wood used for milk pails and bowls. The fruit, which is eaten by children and adults, ripens in November-December. The wood is not suitable for hut rafters, as it is attacked by weevils, but the bark serves as a rough, unworked string for tying together the poles of such structures as pig pens. Water in which the leaves are crushed is used as an eye lotion.

Muvola (*Parinarium curatellifolium*). The fruit, called *grysappel* (grey apple) in Afrikaans, is liked and of very great value in times of starvation. It is said to have saved the people in the years 1894–6, when drought, locusts, and cattle diseases overwhelmed the country. At such times the fruit is prepared, like *morula*, in the form of a cider (*vureba*), which is yellowish and sweet. It also has economic uses.

We have in our list over a hundred different kinds of wild edible fruits and berries, many of them, it is true, eaten chiefly by herdboys. But numerous wild fruits are relished by adults, such as wild figs (of which there are seven different kinds), *muukhoma* (*Burchemia discolor*), of which a tasty, if heavy, cake is made, *mudomma* (*Diospyros mespiliformis*), *muʃazwa* (*Pouzolzia hypoleuca*), *munnthu* (*Syzygium cordatum*), *mucbɛ* (*Anona senegalensis*), and many others. The *morula* is, as we have seen, an important national beverage with valuable anti-scorbutic properties. There are also wild bananas (*muvva*), long ago brought from the north, but now practically eradicated by animals. Not much reliance is placed upon cultivated fruits, but there are oranges, some pawpaws, and mangoes, planted by the early Christians; these have not subsequently been added to to any extent and they are very much neglected.

For relishes, without which porridge cannot be eaten, people rely largely upon nature. Apart from the leaves of pumpkins and beans, which are available from February to June, they use a great variety of wild spinaches, chief among which are blackjack (*Bidens pilosa*), *mufye* (*Solanum nigrum*), and *thɛcbɛ* (*Amoranthus Thumbergi*). In our list we have forty-five greens or relishes. But not only plants provide relishes. In September and in the winter months, when greens are scarce, *mahoru* (*Macrotermes bellicositermes Swaziae*), fatty black male termites, are a great standby. The female of the same species (*dinnʃwa*), which swarm from December to March, the rainy season, are so important in the national diet that they must be ritually 'bitten' (*hu luma*) and sent to the queen from every district. They are roasted, winnowed, and eaten as

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The rule about physical fitness is now merely an ideal and, similarly, ritual suicide is not conceived to have any relation to the welfare of the country. People do not say that the country will suffer if the physical powers of the queen fail. But ritual suicide does elevate the queen to a divinity; only by her act, not because of susceptibility to the weaknesses of man, can she die. Age neither increases nor decreases her powers. She is the 'soil'; her death 'heals' or 'dries up' the soil in the double sense of defiling it (as twins do) and scorching it (as the sun does); and as they phrase it, the 'country dies with its owner'. Consequently, after the queen's death, famines come, cattle and people succumb, and many flee the country. When Mujaji II committed suicide in 1894, there followed the *matshɔna*, the three years of unprecedented drought and pests, during which, according to contemporary European observers, practically all the cattle and a third of the population died. After the death of Mugɔdɔ, likewise, there was a great famine. The only other famine vividly recorded by tradition was during the reign of a chief who, being a usurper, was unable to make rain. Though the death of a chief presages death of the country, there is no great hurry to appoint a new queen. To the unfolding of a plan that guarantees abundance, immediate needs, even the need for the life-giving rain, must be subordinated.

For an account of succession to the throne we have to rely upon the memories of men who were adults forty-five years ago. The practical and the ideal are confused in their minds. The generalized account we give is thus not specifically related to the death of Mujaji II unless otherwise indicated. Shortly before her death, the queen calls together her great men, sits silently looking at them for a while, and then retires to her hut. She will not see again the young boys who have gone to the *vudiga*. Long before this, Mujaji II and her inner 'council' had named the daughter of Leakhali, who was her 'sister' and great wife, as successor; she had driven both mother and daughter with their brothers from the country, but was secretly receiving and instructing the daughter. None but a small circle of close relatives knew of these arrangements; and a little later she took poison (*khitaba*) in which the fatal ingredients are said to be the brain and spinal cord of the crocodile. There is a rule that the killer of a crocodile is for ever debarred from entering the capital, a prohibition patterned upon the taboos against bringing into a village the wood of trees with which shrines and protective charms (*dithugula*) are made, for these trees 'reveal', and so render useless, what they create. The poison is not conceived to kill instantaneously; the queen dies in the presence of those who know the secrets, but the death is not made public. Those who pass the royal hut still greet her; even cases are still submitted as if for her final decision. Deception of the people is the aim emphasized in descriptions and in phraseology. In the old days many cattle were killed 'to deceive the people', but neither this killing, which provided at least for the funeral feast and the skin for the dead body, nor the other arrangements, had this function only. The spirit of the deceased continues, as it were, to preside over the country and no one could take over the reins of government.

The body decomposes, it is ritually rubbed (*hu fɔrɔla*) to remove skin

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physical imperfections, not susceptible to the ills that befall ordinary men; that she cannot die a natural death but departs only by her own volition; that succession to the throne is uncertain since the choice of a ruler must in the last resort be made by the spirits of the tribe; that though she may not have a husband, lest political control become concentrated in him, yet she must bear the heir by a secret consort (a royal classificatory brother) specially chosen to maintain untarnished the purity of the royal blood; that she ensures the regularity of nature and the changing of the seasons; and, more particularly, that her death dislocates the rhythm of nature, bringing drought and famine, the abrogation of law and order. People today still speak with horror and fear of the years (1894–6) following the death of the previous queen, Majuji II. They were years, as we know from documentary sources, when drought, locusts, rinderpest and, in their wake, unprecedented famine and desolation, wiped out practically all the cattle and perhaps a third of the human population.

The preservation of the queen's sanctity requires that her life be subject to observances which shield her from the public eye and restrain her movements. She is 'the huckster in the hut' (*mushava-ndoni*) who sells her rain-medicines from the seclusion of her abode, and may not move about freely or leave the district of the capital. She was the only chief in the Union who, a few years ago, could not go to the Native Commissioners' Office to exercise the vote of her people in the election of a representative to the Native Representative Council. She cannot attend large assemblies of men, and is generally inaccessible except to her close relatives and great councillors. But otherwise her activities are not restricted, nor is her life a continuous ritual and, unlike other Divine Kings, there are no elaborate safeguards surrounding her every movement.

Tradition decrees that chiefs may have no physical defect, but not that they must die while still young and strong. Ritual suicide of the queen is by Lovedu conceptions not a means of guaranteeing a timely death lest failure of physical powers should upset the regularity of nature, but rather a symbol of her divinity, for it proves that she is not heir to the weaknesses of ordinary man. It is mystically connected with the fourth circumcision school in her reign: she must see the boys going in but not coming back. The Lovedu queen is believed to be immune from disease, but age does not diminish—it even increases—her mystical powers over nature. The only disqualification to rule is inability to make rain in the early period of her reign. Once she has demonstrated, by her ability to make rain, that the rain-charms have been entrusted to her and that she has been divinely chosen, irregularities in the seasons are attributed not to weakness of her powers but to some extraneous factor, such as contraventions of rules associated with keeping the country cool, disobedience to the chief, and the anger of the ancestor spirits.

Arrangements connected with succession of a new queen also emphasize her mystical relations with the cosmic order. The death of her predecessor

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cooled with rain-medicine. The polluted corpse (called *pukudi*, the opposite of *fuga*) is thought of as thrusting up an arm and waving it about to disperse the rain.

It is the duty of the queen each year to *thea* or 'establish' the season propitiously for her people. Certain district heads who are close relatives of the queen have rainpots which they revitalize every year with medicine from the queen and stir them up at the queen's command to ensure a propitious season. In the old days the year was 'established' also by the beating of the sacred drums (*gɔmana*) and a visit to the royal ancestor graves, but this has fallen into disuse.

If there is drought or if the rain does not come at its appropriate time, people say the queen has not changed the year properly and steps are taken to approach her. Royal relatives may approach her personally or complain in her hearing that she is killing her people by withholding rain; district heads may formally pay homage (*ku lova*) with gifts of £1 or a head of cattle, or may bring a troupe of dancers to please her and invoke her pity at the spectacle of people dancing when they should be hoeing. The songs (*lesugu*) are associated with offerings to the ancestors and with rain. If these efforts are of no avail diviners are consulted to determine the cause of drought—the rain-charms may have been 'weakened' or evil practices of witches may have prevented rain. In 1937 the people were told at a tribal gathering to report lightning 'sent' by witches, and shortly afterwards, when lightning had struck a tree near a village, boys were sent to sprinkle every house in the area with *mufugo* to 'cool' the lightning. Witches may also disperse rain by hanging up medicated branches which sway in the air. If it is an ancestor that is 'holding the queen's hands' he or she has to be propitiated by the sacrifice of a black beast or sheep on the grave.

When winds frustrate the efforts of the queen to make rain, especially when a gale disperses auspicious black clouds, people come to condole with her as if she had lost a relative, and it is taboo to work in the fields the next day, just as it is on the day after the first rain of the season and on certain other occasions.

The queen is 'Transformer of the Clouds', the changer of the seasons, and guarantor of their cyclic regularity, but she can exercise her powers auspiciously only in certain conditions and in 'agreement with the ancestors'.

Digɔma

The fourth category of forces by which nature is regulated in the interests of man consists of *digɔma* which are associated more especially with changes in the status of man. A *gɔma* is primarily a drum, but as an abstract concept it is particularly identified with the power concentrated in the drum cult. This cult includes the large complex of institutions connected with rites of transition, of which the year-long *vyali-vuhwera* (fertility cult) is one. A *gɔma* is thought of as something mystical and secret, awesome and esoteric. The circumcision 'school' for boys is called a *gɔma* which is said to 'bite'

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ance against future want by building up relations of friendship and goodwill with kin and neighbours whom you can call upon for assistance in time of need. Nor does property, as in Western society, command the services of others to any appreciable extent. The core of helpers in a work-party are there primarily because of ties of kinship and neighbourhood; the beer that is served may be enjoyed by any passer-by who wishes to join in. Traditionally, then, property is of value to the Lobedu only in so far as it can be consumed or meets an immediate need on the one hand or, on the other, is used for creating and maintaining social relationships. This is changing now under conditions of culture contact but the change is still largely confined to Christians.

There is not a great deal of exchange and what there is takes the form most frequently of gift exchange[1]. Property in the form of a gift is a tangible sign of a social relationship. A new bride speaks to no one in her new homestead until given a small gift in token of her new social relationship to the giver and the same holds for a newly-initiated boy or girl. Ties with one's maternal kin and with affines are also kept alive by gifts and gift-exchange. It is significant that agnatic ties are the only ones that do not require continuous gift-exchange. Yet even here a service rendered seldom goes unrewarded. Property and human relationships are, then, closely interlinked. That it is not possible always to separate economic and social relationship among the Lobedu is shown by the following examples. Just after the 1895 rinderpest Khidima, a royal relative, went to the queen, who is traditionally responsible for giving succour to orphans and the needy, to ask for money to buy mealies. She gave him some. A few years later he sent a messenger to her to say he 'had a baby daughter'. The queen accepted the gift and when the girl reached puberty presented her with a *theri* goat according to custom. Cattle followed and the girl, Myakwane, was duly 'married' by the queen. This was the beginning of a permanent bride-giving-bride-receiving relationship, for in 1950 the queen sent a messenger to the widow of Myakwane's brother who had used his sister's cattle, to ask for her daughter in marriage. *'Ge lada dikhomo tja ka. Ge nyaga masafi a le a athisidile*—I am following the tracks of my cattle.

[1] Krige, E. J., 1941.